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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
THEORY – PRACTICE – PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The great popularity and extraordinary possibilities the Internet offers people in the field of information and communication, have made the Internet the subject of the Church's in-depth reflection as an important tool in broadly understood pastoral activities. This article contains a discussion of the effects of this observation and demonstrates how the Church uses the Internet and all Information and Communications Technology. Finally, we will indicate the positive aspects and difficulties facing the Church now operating in the Digital Age. Research clearly shows that the modern Church must use the Internet if it wants to meet people, be close to them and reach them with information. The Church must so consciously and skillfully – taking into account anthropological conditions and the nature of media, including theological premises. An important conclusion emerging from the research is a decisive "no!" concerning various forms of e-Church. The Church's opening up to ICT does not mean consent to transferring its activities onto the Internet. Ecclesiastical relationships are always interpersonal relationships: human-human and Divine-human. The Church – even a synodal one – is a community of persons, not an online discussion group or followers of the Pope, bishop, other pastor or influencer identifying with the Church.

Keywords: Church, pastoral ministry, Internet, Information and Communications Technology, Media, Digital Age

1. Background: Context and Methodology

In order to effectively implement its mission – that is, to lead man in an encounter and intimate relationship with God and to build a *communion* of all believers based on common values, and ultimately to the salvation of all people (Francis 2013, 19–25) – the institutional Church cannot ignore and must take into account to the fact that believers in Christ (like other people of our times) function increasingly often in the media space. The Internet is a place where someone can meet other people and exchange information with them. Today, the Internet is no longer a "virtual addition to real life", but it is an ordinary space in which people function and perform various activities (Dicastery for Communication 2023, 1). The Church, following the course set for it by Vatican II, wants and strives to be present in all "human affairs" (Second Vatican Council 1965, 1–3; 1966, 1–5), and thus also marks its presence on the Internet: by reflecting on it, the Church makes it an important teaching subject and uses it for its activities.

The situation noted above, in which the Internet is treated by the hierarchy (including the Pope), other clergy and theologians as an ally of ecclesial activities and a space and tool for pastoral work is the result of many years of maturing. During this time, the Church learned about the Internet and, earlier, the media in general, and was convinced of their importance. Yet, it was also a time when the media matured and changed, now becoming a space that all people use.

The following section explains how the Church and the media matured to the present situation (*The Magisterium Ecclesiae and the Digital Age*). It aims to synthetically present what the Church has learned about the media, what it has taught about them and how it used them. The next section (*How the Church Functions in the Digital Age*) draws attention to the ambivalence of the Internet and demonstrates the challenges that the Church faces. Today, the Church readily uses modern information and communication techniques in its everyday activities. The final section (*Summary and Conclusions: Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Church in the Digital Age*) provides a theological summary and suggestions. As one can see, the structure of the text corresponds to the three parts of the subtitle: theory, practice and perspectives.

The article aims to synthetically organize and present knowledge about how the Church entered the Digital Age and how it functions in the digital world, emphasizing the related challenges seen from a theological perspective. Therefore, it is not a simple collection of current knowledge about the Church-Internet relationship or an anthology of statements commenting on the Internet. Our text is the result of analyzing pertinent knowledge and statements in order to solve a research problem that can

be expressed by such questions as: What is the Church's attitude towards the Internet as a result of what? How did the Catholic Church function, how does it now function and should function in order to achieve its mission, which – as already indicated – Is to lead people to a personal encounter with Christ and to build a Divine-human community of persons (*communio personarum*), meaning the Church (Concilium Oecumenicum Vatican II 1966, 1–8; Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei 1992).

Achieving the intended goals requires using appropriate research material and applying appropriate methods. This research material consists of Church documents and theological publications on the topic of media in the Church or media anthropology. These texts are studied using deductive methods, i.e., a critical and contextual analysis of sources and research studies while applying comparative and historical-critical methods.

2. The *Magisterium Ecclesiae* and the Digital Age

As we know, the Internet was originally planned and used for military purposes. Awareness of this led to the belief of many church hierarchs that it was "by nature" secular and intended only for this purpose. Many believed that due to its "truly secular nature", the Internet did not have to, or even should not, be in an area of ecclesial interest. Therefore, in the first years, the Church treated the Internet with great reserve. Seeing the advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and threats posed by this "new and little-known medium", it did not even treat it as a potential means used in church activities (Domaszek 2013, 57–60). This point of view, however, changed with the Internet's increasing popularity and expansion in various spheres of life.

The Internet became popular during John Paul II's pontificate. It is therefore not surprising that it was at that time that the first documents were created addressing the global computer network in relation to people's lives and the Church community. So far, these are treated as "classics" in this respect. The creation of these documents, however, did not cause a revolution in the social teaching of the Church, but they were "simply" a milestone. The statements of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae* concerning the Internet and modern information and communication techniques are a continuation of earlier teachings concerning social life, including the media. This results from Catholic Social Teaching, whose natural value is continuity (Pontifical Council for Iustitia et Pax 2005, 85–86).

John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, referring to St. Paul's evangelizing activity, compared the space created by the means of social communication, including the Internet, to the ancient Athenian Areopagus, which the Apostle of the Nations used in an innovative way to preach the Gospel. The modern Church should act similarly based on his

example, using the possibilities of the Internet for evangelization. In this encyclical, the Pope writes: „The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a "global village." The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media" (John Paul II 1990, 37). Detailing his thoughts, he then adds: „Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology" (John Paul II 1990, 37).

The presence of Christians in the media, which influence the entire world, is therefore an opportunity to change it for the better - to inspire and imbue it with the spirit of the Gospel (Pontifical Council for Iustitia et Pax 2005, 62–65).

These words by the Pope and the theses that are their logical consequence undoubtedly apply not only to "traditional media," but also to the Internet. Today, thanks to convergence, all media accumulate on the Internet. Therefore, what can be said about the media as such can also be said about the Internet (Meikle and Young 2011). Understanding the context and knowing other statements of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae* allows us to conclude that the papal message can, and even should, be read not only as an encouragement to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in ecclesial activities but also warns against removing modern information and communication technologies from pastoral activity at every level. This is especially true in a parish, a kind of focal point of the Church's overall pastoral care, which was pointed out earlier. This thesis is confirmed by theologians who apply the words of St. Paul to pastors who distance themselves from ICT in their parish activities. St. Paul said "woe" to those who put aside their pastoral duties (1Cor 9:16). This also applies to those who perform them incorrectly, including those who are inconsistent with the times (Mielcarek 2002; Dicastery for Communication 2023, 42–44). This thesis is confirmed by subsequent church documents in which the Internet is a leading topic.

Since the Church has understood the importance of the media and opened up to new technologies, the Internet has become a topic that is

receiving increased attention. Documents about new media began to be created. To put it differently, we can say that, taking into account the fact that contemporary Christians live in a world filled with various kinds of technology, we are now living in a mediatized world full of information and infrastructure helpful in its exploitation (Wyrostkiewicz 2015b). The Popes of the 21ˢᵗ century have published documents that will help believers and other "people of good will" find themselves and function according to the will of the Creator "in a world full of information and computers", one in which the Church continues to fulfill its mission.

In this context, John Paul II's *Message for the 24ᵗʰ World Communications Day* is worth reviewing. In this text, the Pope points out and justifies the need to address the topic of the presence of Christians in the "Internet world." The Pontifical Council for Social Communications also issued documents relating to ethics in the media: *Ethics in the Media* (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2000), *Ethics on the Internet* (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2002a) and a compendium of knowledge in this area entitled *The Church and the Internet* (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2002b). Here, communication possibilities and ways of using the Internet are clearly described in such a way that they be used as tools for the Church to fulfill its mission. These documents and their theological commentaries draw attention to the multi-faceted phenomenon of the Internet.

The Internet's advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and possibilities, but also challenges and threats related to using it, especially in the context of ecclesial activities, are noticed. In this context, it is often emphasized that the Internet can be a useful tool in evangelization and re-evangelization, catechesis and other forms of Catholic education and upbringing. Moreover, it can be used in Church administration and various types of support and spiritual direction (Umiński 2017, 88–96). It is also noted that the Internet is often used to maintain interpersonal relationships and may prove to be an effective community-creator (Wyrostkiewicz 2013). Therefore, it appears to be an important and serious pastoral instrument.

Reflecting on the Church in the digital age, John Paul II emphasized that evangelization, whose aim is to proclaim the Good News of salvation, is not subject to geographical or cultural limitations. In this context, he noted that the Internet, which by nature is decentralized and universal, meaning addressed to everyone, and non-geographic (Wyrostkiewicz 2015a, 81–88), makes these boundaries lose their meaning. Therefore, he sees it as a zone for exchanging views and observations, as well as presenting opportunities for transmitting faith experiences. For John Paul II, the Net is a modern forum or agora, a space and place open to everyone. This means that the Internet, as a tool that provides information and arouses human interests, can become an opportunity for a first encounter with the Christian message, especially for young people who increasingly

use cyberspace as their window to the world (John Paul II 2002, 3–4).

In this context, the Pope assigns tasks to those who are already in the Church. He concludes that the Christian community should consider how to concretely help all those who come into contact with Christianity for the first time via the Internet, so that they can move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of a Christian community. This means that John Paul II from the beginning perceives the Internet as one of the forms of pastoral activity that will ultimately lead to direct interpersonal relationships and the building of a real community of believers (John Paul II 2002, 3). Therefore, it can be said that the Pope clearly opposes the creation of an e-Church that would operate only on the Internet, as is the case with many other communities.

John Paul II's positive attitude towards the Internet does not mean that he ignores its flaws and threats. On the contrary, he directly writes: „The Church approaches this new medium with realism and confidence. Like other communications media, it is a means, not an end in itself. The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses" (John Paul II 2002, 3).

Pope Benedict XVI also encouraged people to use new technologies in the life of the Church, including pastoral activities conducted in the parish. In the *Message for the 45th World Communications Day*, he wrote, among others: „I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life. The web is contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons, new forms of shared awareness. In this field too we are called to proclaim our faith that Christ is God, the Savior of humanity and of history, the one in whom all things find their fulfillment" (Benedict XVI 2011).

The Pope emphasized the enormous opportunities the Internet offers. In this context, he drew attention to the same advantages that his predecessor noticed. Therefore, he concluded that the exchange of information thanks to new technologies brings many benefits. Benedict saw the simple possibility of communication and maintaining contact with family members who are separated, maintaining friendly relationships, with easy access to documents, sources and information. Moreover, he emphasized that the interactive nature of the Internet provides a new quality of teaching and communication and enables dialogue with people from different nationalities, countries and cultures, which appears to be beneficial in the work of evangelizing "all nations" and witnessing to Christ "before the whole world" (Benedict XVI 2011).

Pope Francis also noted the advantages of the Internet as a pastoral and evangelizing tool. This is most clearly evident in the documents

created during his pontificate. Their authors no longer see the Internet as an "add-on", but as an ordinary pastoral tool. They are aware of the fact that technological progress has opened up new possibilities for interpersonal interactions to such an extent that the question is no longer "whether to engage in the digital world", but "how to do it". At the same time, they note that this is not an easy task. Although „significant progress has been made in the digital age, one of the urgent questions that still remains to be resolved is how we, as individuals and as an ecclesial community, are to live in the digital world as "loving neighbors," truly present and attentive to each other while traveling together on "digital roads"" (Dicastery for Communication 2023, 1).

The great novelty of the document is the fact that its authors pay special attention to social media, an environment in which people interact, share experiences and cultivate relationships like never before. Although it is still the domain of young people, older generations do so as well, meaning that almost all people expect to meet wherever they are, including on social media, because the digital world is an essential element of "identity and way of life" (Dicastery for Communication 2023, 1; Synod of Bishops 2018, 4).

In this context, there is information about influencers who increasingly play the role of religious leaders (Wyrostkiewicz, Sosnowska, and Wójciszyn-Wasil 2022): „People search for someone that can give direction and hope; they are hungry for moral and spiritual leadership, but they do not often find it in traditional places. It is common now to turn to "influencers", individuals who gain and maintain a large following, who acquire greater visibility and are able to inspire and motivate others with their ideas or experiences" (Dicastery for Communication 2023, 72).

There is no doubt that, in today's mediatized world, influencers play an important opinion-forming role, which is reflected in the lives of individual people and entire communities, including the Church community (Wyrostkiewicz, Sosnowska, and Wójciszyn-Wasil 2023). Immersion in media space is one of the most important contexts for modern man's functioning. More social activities are being mediatized, including those related to religion (Radde-Antweiler and Grünenthal 2020). Therefore, it is impossible not to underestimate the continuous potential role of influencers on Church activities. Properly conducted influencer activity shows signs of realizing the mission of the Church in a mediatized world (Wyrostkiewicz, Sosnowska, and Wójciszyn-Wasil 2023).

3. How the Church Functions in the Digital Age

The Internet and the entire ICT sphere related to it are unique media and tools. Their uniqueness lies in the fact that they provide direct and immediate access to various types of information. They also include information related to faith and religious life. There are many websites

containing biblical texts, often with professional commentaries. There is also no shortage of documents from the *Magisterium Eccelsiae*, writings of the Fathers of the Church and other serious theological treatises (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2002b, 5–6).

One can also find many unofficial texts concerning faith on Internet resources. The network is rich in various discussions, personal messages and testimonies of the Christian life. The latter activities are particularly conducted through social media, which are increasingly used not only by lay people, but also by members of the clergy (Wyrostkiewicz, Sosnowska, and Wójciszyn-Wasil 2022), including bishops and popes (Giacometti 2019). The presence of these texts and other materials mentioned here - from the Bible to influencer messages – means that Christians increasingly use the Internet to deepen their knowledge and religious formation.

The possibilities of computer technology were first used in the Church in the late 1980s. The Holy See's outlook on the Internet sphere changed by the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. A significant step towards systematically using the Internet was registering the VA domain as the official domain of the Vatican State and the Holy See. An important date in the history of the Internet in the Church is December 24, 1995. It was then that e-mail and the official Vatican website ("La Santa Sede") were launched. That year, Pope John Paul II's Christmas message was published along with a photo and link to download this document. Immediately afterward, messages started arriving via e-mail. It was a big step into the digital age. This application has made correspondence much easier.

E-mail provided the possibility of two-way correspondence with the Vatican, especially between bishops' conferences and dioceses. Documents were systematically collected and made available electronically. In 1996, the Internet Office (*Ufficio Internet della Santa Sede*) was established. The Vatican's opening up to the newness of the Internet and computers was a very important decision. After three days of existence, the website recorded over half a million visits. A significant event and a symbol of the Church's opening up to the media and their new possibilities was the signing and electronic sending of the exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (November 23, 2001). John Paul II, in the presence of journalists (i.e., in front of the whole world), for the first time in history, sent the content of the document to the bishops of Oceania in such a modern way, with one press of the *Enter* key. The Church has become empirically convinced about the power of the Internet (Podpora 2007).

Since then, the Internet has become an important tool for ecclesial activities. As the Pontifical Council for Social Communications notes, for some time now the Internet and ICT have had a permanent place and application in many types of ecclesial activities and Catholic programs regarding evangelization, re-evangelization and new evangelization. It is also important in traditional *ad gentes* missionary ministry, catechesis and

other types of education, news and information, apologetics, management and administration, and certain forms of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2002b, 5).

For the Church, the Internet has become a new missionary territory to which every Christian is sent. A new virtual space is opening up, and it is like an impulse that stimulates, encourages and motivates people to use the potential and possibilities of new technologies in proclaiming the Good News (Kloch 2013, 23). The Church hierarchy and theologians have concluded that, despite the threats posed by the Internet, one should not be afraid of it, especially considering the ease with which people can establish contact with others via the Internet and convey the Gospel to them and the number of people who can be reached via the Internet. All Christians should be ready to love and help other people, including those they meet in the virtual world. The Internet is also supposed to help people who have already been evangelized - as an aid in teaching or catechesis (John Paul II 2002).

Over time, computers have become an essential element in the lives of many people. The wide range and use of Internet services have led it to become a tool that is used in virtually every area of life. Websites (WWW = World Wide Web) help here. Their creation was a breakthrough moment in the history of the Internet and the entire information transfer process, thanks to which the Internet is increasingly used. This also applies to the Church, which – as already noted – has become a regular Internet user (Kloch 2013, 23).

Perceiving the Church's use of ICT for pastoral activities, one cannot fail to notice the presence of the hierarchy, including popes, in social media (Giacometti 2019, 7–11). Not only does the Vatican have its website, but also profiles on social networking sites. The Pope's thoughts and his current message, even "the word of life for today", are published in various languages using the *@Pontifex* account on *X* – formerly *Twitter* ("X"). This last element is gaining increased popularity and appears to be the Pope's actual direct contact with specific people. His voice is also heard by the media and other institutions for which Twitter is an important source of information about the world – namely events, people and their thinking and actions (Wajs 2015).

The use of social media by the clergy, especially bishops and popes, greatly influences not only people's perception but also their understanding of the Church. For many, due to the method of communication, it is becoming "more and more of a community". Scientific research shows that this is actually happening: this method of communication unlocks the Church's community potential (Müllerová and Franc 2023).

Undoubtedly, the use of social media shortens the distance between the faithful and the hierarchy, and also blurs the historically established boundary between the teaching and listening Church (Wyrostkiewicz,

Sosnowska, and Wójciszyn-Wasil 2022, 13–15).

Various ecclesial people and agencies operate in a similar way to hierarchs. They use social media not only for formalized pastoral activities (Wajs 2019), but also for less formal and direct contact with the faithful and people seeking information about the Church and the truth that answers basic questions about man, the world and God. In this way, knowledge is passed on and the testimony of Christian thinking and life is given; thus, the community of people lives the same truths and values, and those who seek them are strengthened (Dicastery 2023, 72–24; Wyrostkiewicz, Sosnowska, and Wójciszyn-Wasil 2023, 13–15).

4. Summary and Conclusions: Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Church in the Digital Age

This somewhat brief analysis of selected documents of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae* presented above and the practice of ecclesial institutions clearly show that the Church encourages the wise and prudent use of ICT in pastoral activities and supports such activities by word and example. However, this does not mean absolute optimism in our approach to the Internet and other media. It is not by accident that the need for wise and prudent use of ICT in pastoral activities was mentioned above. This need becomes even more visible when attention is directed to potential threats to the effectiveness of pastoral care implemented using modern Internet and computer information exploitation techniques.

When writing about the advantages of the Internet, its role in ecclesial information and communication activities, as well as its advantages as an instrument integrating the community – guided by research honesty and the need to convey the full truth – it is impossible, even briefly, not to pay attention to the challenges and threats that arise from incorrectly perceiving the Internet and its use. Silence on this topic may lead to the idea that ICT is the basic space and tool for pastoral activities. The truth is that the Internet should be used in the Church, especially in pastoral care, as an important means, but it is only complementary to "traditional" pastoral ministry.

The Internet is a useful medium that can be treated as an aid, but it will not replace meeting another person in reality, something that should be kept in mind. John Paul II emphasized that the Internet is a means, not a goal, of evangelization activities. He also stressed that it should be used responsibly and properly. Only then will it be possible to meet the appropriate conditions for transmitting the Good News (John Paul II 2002, 3).

The rapid and dynamic development of the means of social communication has not only changed, but even revolutionized the methods of participating and being involved in the life of the entire Church and its smaller communities (Müllerová and Franc 2023). In a

community, everyone has certain rights and obligations. In the modern world, in the era of such well-developed media, there is a temptation to participate in Church life through the media. The ability to listen to a radio broadcast and watch Mass on TV or via the Internet can often give a sense of release from the obligation to physically participate in the celebration. Moreover, it is inappropriate to reduce religious monitoring, meaning broadcasting the Holy Mass, to simply watching it like a TV series, sitting in an armchair or lying on the sofa at home. The same applies, for example, to care for the community and responsibility for the Church, which is not fulfilled by an electronic financial transfer to the parish account (Domaszk 2013, 219–21; Draguła 2002, 44–45).

It should also be emphasized that no means of social communication can replace one's personal encounter with God - the deep experience of His presence and love that a person undertakes on the path of faith, namely the liturgical life in the community of the Church. The virtual reality of cyberspace cannot replace the real human community, the embodied reality of the sacraments and liturgy, or the direct proclamation of the Gospel, but it can complement them, attracting people by providing a fuller experience of the life of faith and enriching the religious lives of those using it. It also provides the Church with a means of communicating with specific groups – youth and young adults, the elderly and those confined to homes, those living in remote areas, and members of other religious groups with whom contact by other means is difficult (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2002b, 5).

When we hear about the possibility, or simply the need, to use ICT to build a community, we may be misunderstood, meaning that it is rather about building a reality that might be called the e-Church. It must be clearly stated that such an institution is incompatible with Christian ecclesiology.

Although the presence and activity of believers on the Internet is very important, especially when it comes to evangelization and strengthening interpersonal relationships, it cannot mean consent to creating an "online community" (e-Church, e-diocese, e-parish). There is no theological or legal possibility for this, just as there is no legal way to administer the sacraments (e.g. confession via the Internet). The Internet does not meet the criteria necessary to establish a diocesan community. The new evangelization does encourage us to look for and use new methods and tools to spread the Good News to reach all people. However, this should never lead to building a "virtual Church". The presence of the faithful, meaning the Church community, is not the same on the Internet as the existence of an institutional or parallel Church on the Internet. This presence is solely related to fulfilling the evangelization mandate of the ecclesial community (Domaszk 2013, 219–21). Thus, when we talk about the participation of ICT in creating an ecclesial community, or more specifically a parish community, it is not about creating a group on the

Internet, but about the media supporting a real community described above.

The often-quoted document *The Church and Internet* contains an encouragement to connect the real world with cyberspace at the same time; pastoral plans should take into account how to lead people from cyberspace into a real community (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 2002b, 9). Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes that it is important to always remember that virtual contact cannot and should not replace direct contact with people at all levels of people's lives. The truth of the Gospel proclaimed in the space of the virtual network always requires embodiment in the real world where one faces specific brothers and sisters with whom they share everyday life experiences. For this reason, direct interpersonal relationships continue to be of fundamental importance in the transmission of faith (Benedict XVI 2011).

It is worth stressing that the Church hierarchy and theologians encourage people not to be afraid of cyberspace, but on the contrary, to be open to its possibilities and use it. Church people are present on the Network – both clergy and lay people. They, as part of their activities undertaken for the Church or while fulfilling their secular duties in all structures, should skillfully and creatively use the Internet and its resources. People must also be aware that, just as in the real world, they are responsible for themselves, for other people they meet in cyberspace, and for the image of the Church and the "ecclesial brand" with which they are associated due to their affiliation with the Church (Polish Bishops' Conference 2023).

Drawing attention to the ambivalent nature of the Internet and ICT cannot be an argument for the Church's hierarchy, pastors and lay faithful to distance themselves from these spaces and tools in their ecclesial activities. As previously noted, Church people should not question including ICT in the life of the ecclesial community, but rather ask how to do it properly. This means using it in such a way as to fulfill the Church's mission, whose essence is to convey the kerygma to people, establish and consolidate the community and, consequently, lead people to meet God, which will result in eternal life in communion with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven.

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